Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:

receiving a request to access a network resource accessible through each of a plurality of servers, wherein licenses to access said network resource are distributed to each respective said servers and wherein a total of said licenses distributed to said servers corresponds to a maximum limit of allowed licensed connections to said network resource;

determining whether granting the requested access to the network resource provides a number of licensed connections equal to or less than said maximum limit;

granting the requested access to the network resource if it is determined that the granting of the requested access provides said number of licensed connections equal to or less than said maximum limit; ~~and~~

load balancing according to license availability by directing said granted requested access to one of said servers having at least one of its said respective licenses available for said requested access; and

providing a warning message if a threshold limit, of a number of licensed connections less than said maximum limit of licensed connections, is reached.

2.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said network resource includes an application available from each of said servers.

3.   (Canceled)

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4.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said servers include mail servers and wherein said licenses distributed to said servers include licenses allocated to a plurality of said mail servers based on usernames assigned to said mail servers.

5.   (Canceled)

6.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said servers include mail servers and wherein said licenses distributed to said servers include ~~license~~ licenses allocated to said mail servers based on geographic information associated with users that request access to the network resource.

7.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising keeping at least one of a local log or syslog to track information associated with licensed connections to the network resource.

8.   (Original) The method of claim 7, further comprising providing third-party access to at least one of the local log or syslog to allow licenses associated with the tracked information stored therein to be remotely managed or monitored.

9.   (Canceled)

10.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein associated maximum limits of allowed licensed connections, of a plurality of network resources, are arranged according to a parent/child arrangement.

11 - 36.   (Canceled)

37.   (Currently Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

a network device adapted to load balance traffic amongst a plurality of servers according to a number of paid permitted connections to a network resource available through said plurality of servers.

wherein said network device is further adapted to provide a warning if a threshold limit, of a number of paid permitted connections less than a maximum limit of paid permitted connections, is reached.

38. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein said network device is a switch adapted to direct a request to access said network resource to one of said servers, which are communicatively coupled to said switch.

39. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 37 wherein said plurality of servers include email servers.

40. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 37, further comprising a data repository, included in said network device and accessible by said network device, to store log information usable by said network device to determine usage of, and compliance with an agreement pertaining to, said paid permitted connections.

41. (Canceled)

42. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture, comprising:
a storage medium storing instructions that are executable by a network device to:
determine a number of paid permitted connections to at least one network resource accessible through each of a plurality of servers, wherein said number of paid permitted connections to said at least one network resource is distributed amongst said servers; ~~and~~
load balance traffic amongst said plurality of servers according to said number of paid permitted connections; and
provide a warning if a threshold limit, of a number of paid permitted connections less than a maximum limit of paid permitted connections, is reached.

43.   (Previously Presented) The article of manufacture of claim 42 wherein said plurality of servers include an email server.

44.   (Previously Presented) The article of manufacture of claim 42 wherein said instructions executable by said network device to determine includes instructions executable by said network device to:

access a data repository adapted to store log information, including data that specifies said number of paid permitted connections; and

use said log information to determine usage of, and compliance with an agreement pertaining to, said paid permitted connections.

45. - 47.   (Canceled)

48.   (New) An apparatus, comprising:

a network device adapted to load balance traffic amongst a plurality of servers according to a number of paid permitted connections to a network resource available through said plurality of servers,

wherein said network device is further adapted to provide a warning if a threshold limit, of a number of paid permitted connections less than a maximum limit of paid permitted connections, is reached, and

wherein said servers include mail servers and wherein said paid permitted connections available through said plurality of servers include licenses allocated to said mail servers based on usernames assigned to said mail servers.

49.   (New) The apparatus of claim 48, further comprising a data repository, included in said network device and accessible by said network device, to store log information usable by said network device to determine usage of, and compliance with an agreement pertaining to, said paid permitted connections.

50.   (New) The apparatus of claim 48 wherein said paid permitted connections available through said plurality of servers further include licenses allocated to said mail servers based on geographic information associated with users that request access to the network resource.